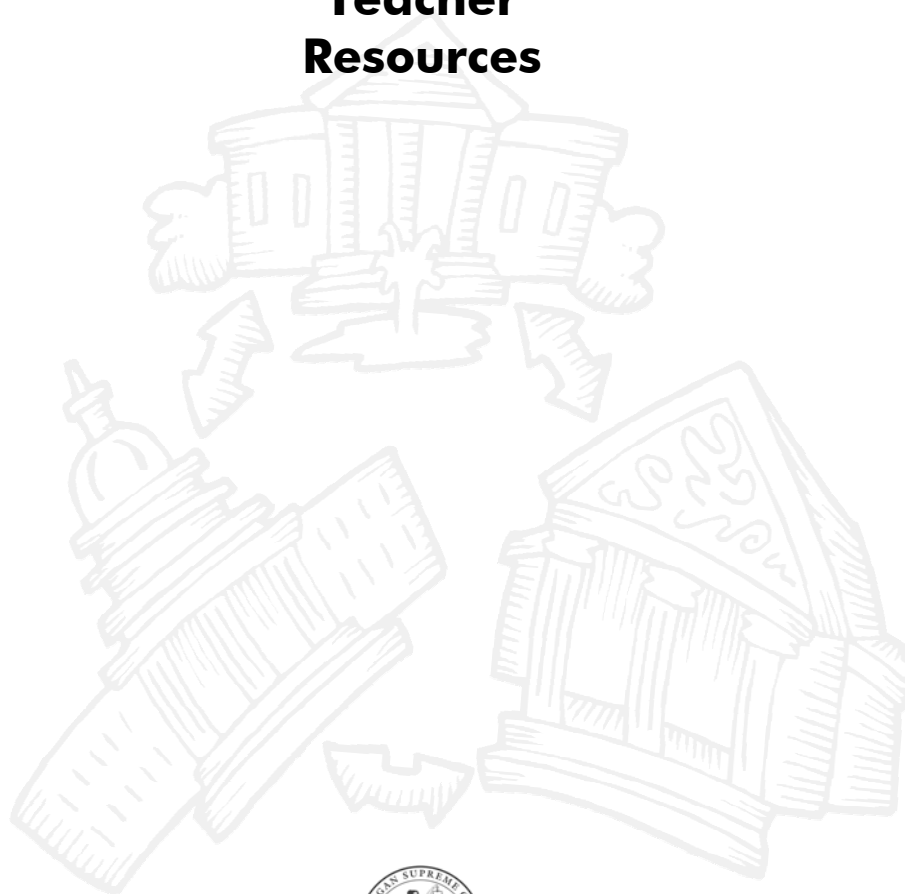


Separation of Powers

Teacher Resources



Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center

925 W. Ottawa St.
P.O. Box 30205
Lansing, MI 48909
517-373-7229
web: courts.mi.gov/plc/

Three Branches of Government

There are three branches of government. The U.S. Constitution defines the three branches of government as legislative, executive, and judicial. Michigan's Constitution includes the same branches. They are present at the federal, state, and local levels of government. These branches serve as checks and balances for one another. Each branch of government has its own responsibilities.

Executive Branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforces laws Prepares and presents budgets Manages executive departments, services, and programs 	Federal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governor Local <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mayor; County Executive; Township Supervisor
Legislative Branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes laws and ordinances Appropriates funds to other branches of government Creates agencies, authorities, and other public bodies 	Federal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Congress State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan State Legislature Local <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Council; County Board of Commissioners; Township Board of Supervisors; Township Board of Trustees
Judicial Branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interprets and upholds laws Protects individual rights Punishes the guilty Manages information 	Federal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Supreme Court; U.S. Circuit Court; U.S. District Court State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan Supreme Court; Michigan Court of Appeals Local <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michigan Circuit Courts; Michigan District Courts; Michigan Probate Courts

Which Branch Is It? Directions: Place a check in the column for the correct branch of government.

	Executive	Legislative	Judicial
1) Police Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Court Clerk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Secretary of State	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Supreme Court Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) Mayor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) State Representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) State Senator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Attorney General	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) District Court Judge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Web Resources

Michigan Constitution

Three Branches of Government—Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center
courts.michigan.gov/lc-gallery/3-branches-govt.htm

Explanation of the three branches of government with a focus on Michigan government. Includes materials for classroom use.

Michigan Legislature

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/>

Database of Michigan laws. “Constitution Search” allows keyword searches of the Michigan Constitution. Click on “Chapter Index” for the full text of the Michigan Constitution (Chapter 1). “Historical Documents” offers links to the text of the Northwest Ordinance and the Michigan constitutions of 1835, 1850, and 1908.

U.S. Constitution

Charters of Freedom: Constitution of the United States—National Archives
www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html

Online exhibit that includes transcripts of the U.S. Constitution and background information.

Interactive Constitution—National Constitution Center
www.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/

Allows searches of the U.S. Constitution by keyword, topic, or Supreme Court cases.

Lesson Plans

Separation of Powers—American Bar Association
www.abanet.org/publiced/lawday/schools/lessons/46_lawofficers.html

Law Day lesson plan that includes role playing and questions and answers. (Grades 4–6).

Conversations on the Constitution—American Bar Association
www.abanet.org/publiced/conversations/constitution/conversationstarters.html

Conversation starters and questions for discussion of primary-source materials on different topics, including separation of powers.

www.abanet.org/publiced/conversations/constitution/test_whatcantheydo.html

A quiz about powers granted to the three branches of government by the U.S. Constitution.

Balancing Three Branches at Once—EDSITEment (NEH)
edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=222

Using primary source documents, students can see clear demonstrations of how one branch of government can check another. (Grades 3–5)

Powers within Michigan—SCoPE (Oakland Schools)
www.oakland.k12.mi.us/scope/intheworks/ss040303.doc

Students examine the functions of Michigan's state government with specific focus on checks and balances. (Grade 4).

No Vehicles in the Park—Washington Courts
www.courts.wa.gov/education/lessons/?fa=education_lessons.display&displayid=Novehc

Students pretend to be judges and decide if the law has been violated or if they will interpret the law to allow an exception. (Grades 5-12)

Integrity and Our Constitutional Democracy—National Constitution Center
www.constitutioncenter.org/education/ForEducators/LessonPlans/SeparationofPowers/5484.shtml

Students examine how the principle of separation of powers is essentially an integrating principle: all three branches of government working together as one. (Middle School & High School)

Constitutional Issues: The Separation of Powers—National Archives
www.archives.gov/education/lessons/separation-powers/

Students analyze a primary-source document related to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's attempt to "pack" the U.S. Supreme Court during the Great Depression.

Checks & Balances in Supreme Court Nominations—PBS NewsHour Extra
www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/socialstudies/scotus_nominations.html

Students examine aspects of the balance of power among the branches and the process of judicial nomination and confirmation through group work and class discussion.

Other Resources

MI Climb—Michigan Department of Education
www.miclimb.net/content/

Searchable database that includes clarifications of benchmarks, resources, instructional examples, and assessment examples. Keywords: separation of powers, checks and balances, branches of government.

Books

Kowalski, Kathiann M. *A Balancing Act: A Look at Checks and Balances (How Government Works)*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 2003. (Ages 9-12).

Sobel, Syl and Denise Gilgannon. *The U.S. Constitution and You*. Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2001. (Ages 9-12).

——— and Pam Tanzey. *How the U.S. Government Works*. Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's. Educational Series, Inc., 1999. (Ages 4-8).

Answers, page 1: 1) E; 2) J; 3) E; 4) J; 5) E; 6) L; 7) E; 8) L; 9) E; 10) J.